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Nguyen '15 Places In Putnam Competition

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Nguyen '15 Places In Putnam Competition

May 15, 2013

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan student Tung Nguyen '15, a mathematics and economics double major from Hanoi, Vietnam, placed 49th and earned an Honorable Mention in the prestigious annual William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition. The competition, which took place on December 1, 2012, is renowned for its difficulty and includes student participants from schools such as Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Carnegie-Mellon University.

Elizabeth Lowell Putnam founded the competition in 1927, in memory of her husband William Lowell Putnam, an advocate of intercollegiate intellectual competition. The Mathematical Association of America has offered the exam annually since 1938. The self-enrolling competition is open to undergraduate college students at institutions of higher learning in the United States and Canada. Considered by many to be the most prestigious university-level mathematics examination in the world, the competition consists of two three-hour sittings in which participants are given the task of solving twelve problems that require extensive creative thinking.

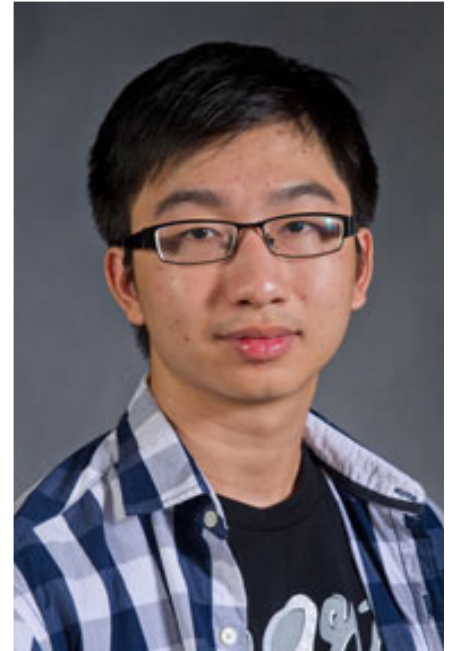
Top students are awarded cash prizes ranging from \$250 to \$2,500, and top schools are awarded prizes of \$5,000 to \$25,000. In addition, the top ten individual scores receive waived tuition at Harvard, and the top 100 individual scores have their names mentioned by rank to leading universities.

Nguyen and several other Illinois Wesleyan students competed among 4,277 contestants from 578 institutions across North America. The median score among these contestants was 0 out of 120 possible points, while Nguyen scored 50 points, earning his rank of 49th place.

According to Nguyen, who has competed in numerous competitions at the regional and national level, this competition proved the most challenging. To prepare, the participating IWU students met weekly with Assistant Professor of Economics and Computer Science Andrew Shallue and Visiting Professor of Mathematics Aaron Zerhusen to discuss and solve practice problems. Nguyen found the preparation helpful in leading to his success in the competition, which he describes to be a motivating accomplishment.

"The competition increased my interest and joy in math again. I was inspired to do something more than attending classes and studying, so I began a research project with another student. I hope to pursue further education in math or economics, where I can further apply my problem-solving skills," said Nguyen.

For additional information, contact Dr. Andrew Shallue at ashallue@iwu.edu.



Tung Nguyen

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